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The Day After Tomorrow: Transition Management, Spatial Planning & the Low Carbon Economy

Ellis, G., Barry, J., Curry, R., & Hume, T. (2015). *The Day After Tomorrow: Transition Management, Spatial Planning & the Low Carbon Economy*. Paper presented at AESOP Prague Annual Congress 2015: Definite space - fuzzy responsibility, Prague, Czech Republic. <http://www.aesop2015.eu/>

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version

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The Day After Tomorrow:
Transition Management, Spatial
Planning & the Low Carbon Economy

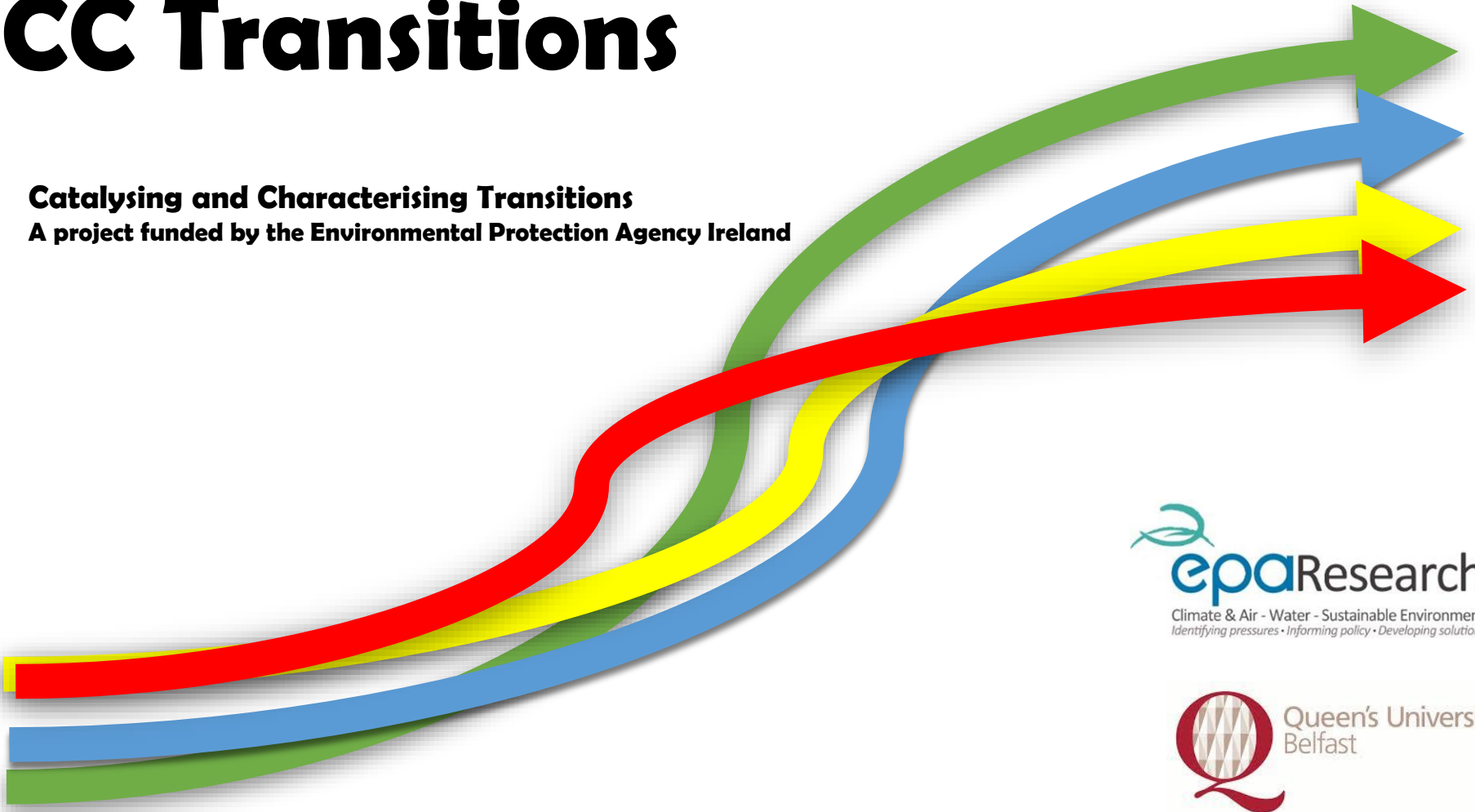
AESOP Congress 13-18th July 2015

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CC Transitions

Catalysing and Characterising Transitions

A project funded by the Environmental Protection Agency Ireland



<http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/TheInstituteofSpatialandEnvironmentalPlanning/Impact/CurrentResearchProjects/CCTransitions/>

Outline

- Planning, global challenges and the future.
- Transition Theory and Transition Management
- The Low Carbon transition
- Planning, Transition and a low carbon economy



Planning can be described as....

'the exercise of deliberate forethought by people'

Alexander, 1992

'persuasive storytelling about the future'

'ability to prescribe the future urban life'

Davidoff 2003

Frogmorton, 1992

'an explicit exercise in imagining the future'

'the guidance of future action'

Forester, 1989

Healey, 1996

'it identifies a (future) order together with the steps that must be taken to bring it about, based on knowledge concerning the present order of things'

'all conscious attempts to organise action in order to affect future outcomes'

Faludi, 1973

Paris, 1982

From: Connell, 2009

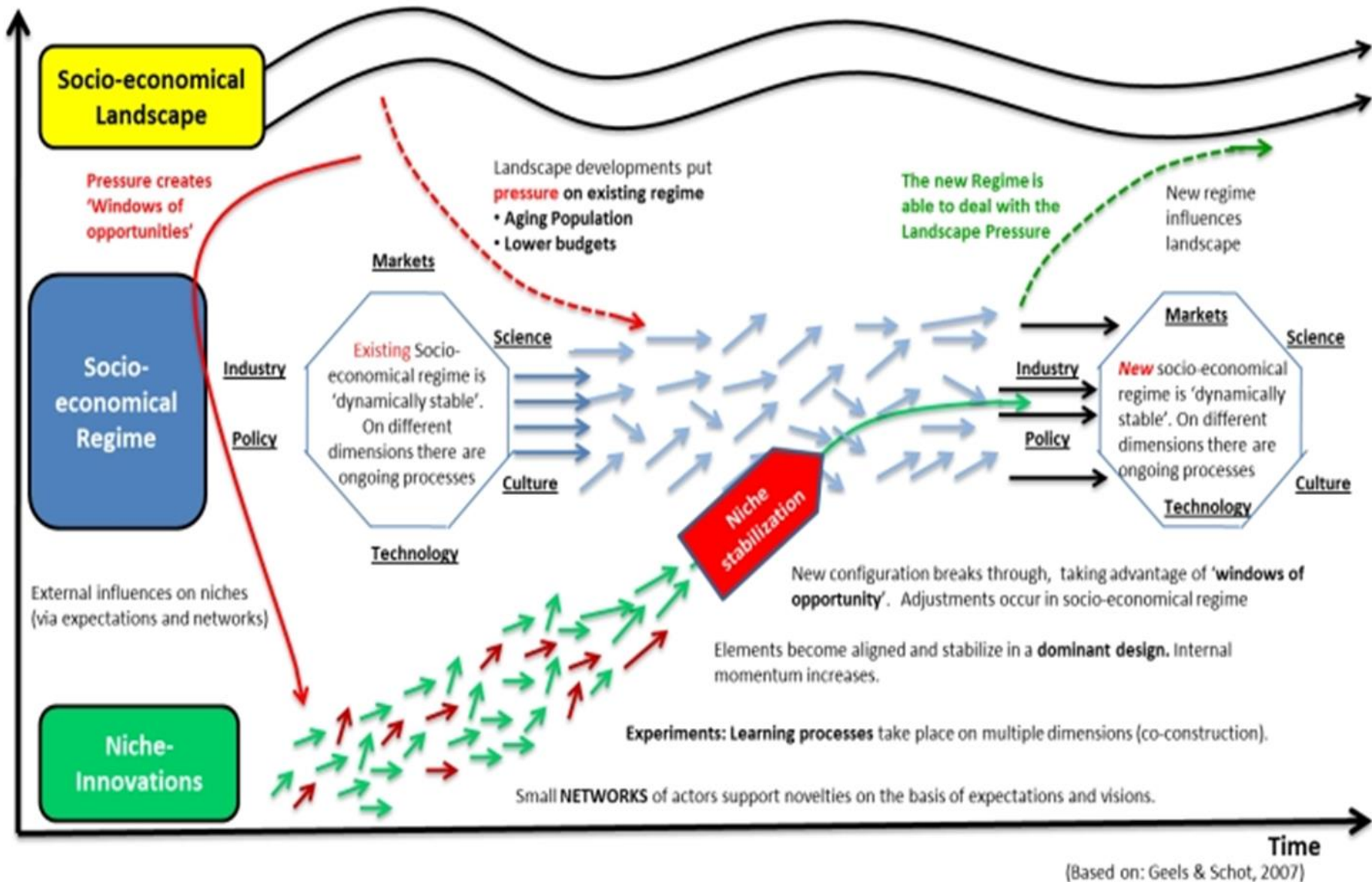
Planning and the future

- The demands of grand challenges
- Is planning well-equipped for thinking about the future?
- Utopianism and Pragmatism;
- Time, Timescales and uncertainty in planning
- Tools for thinking about the future: forecasting, visioning, scanning
- Neoliberalism, laissez-faire & a declining capacity for intervention.

Transition perspectives

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Increasing structuration
of activities in local
practices



Transition Management

- Transition studies explore ways of 'unlocking' sub-optimal, inefficient or undesired socio-technical configurations to open up new
- An emphasis on innovation (technological, social, policy)
- The interplay of society, technology and governance, across different geographic and temporal scales.
- Ongoing theoretical debates on the role of spatial context, power, social learning etc.
- Transition management combines reflexive governance and complex adaptive systems theory – used by the Dutch government for a decade.



Transition Theory and the Energy system

- Recognition of energy as a socio technical system, embedded in a complex multi dimensional multi actor and multi-level arena, with dynamic properties.
- Highlights the strong impact of lock-in of past decisions re. fossil fuel energy sources.
- Confirms the crucial role of government policy and dispels the notion that major long terms transitions are technology or market .
- Highlights the importance of the dynamic between multi-levels of governance and contexts (EU-National- local)

Planning and transition

- The 'steering' effect of regulatory regimes: spatial planning is often the most effective vehicle for key transition activity.
- The growing emphasis on the urban arena in tackling climate change.
- The spatial dimensions of energy policy/governance are largely undeveloped.
- Spatiality and the framing energy discourse and policy: e.g. local site battles can reframe the level and scale of concerns.
- Inertia and policy capture in planning can suppress innovation and reproduce structures of lock in..

Planning as a *tool* of transition

- How can planning impede or facilitate key transition activity:
 - Innovation; envisioning, alternative scenarios, pathway identification.
- How can planning goals and transition visions be aligned?
- Does planning adequately recognise the social sphere- or the role of technology - in securing long term plan objectives?
- The need for a better understanding of the dynamic interactions within an urban area.
- Is planning governance adequately reflexive?
- How can local level plans link with broader transition goals and long term visions and cope with uncertainty.
- Can planning be both regulatory and enabling?

Planning as a *subject* of transition

- We are currently 'locked in' a market supportive, pragmatic planning system whose rationality represses issues of social justice or sustainability.
- How can we use the insights from transition to think about changing the way we plan?
- Where and how does innovation occur in planning systems?
- Where are the 'radical novelties' and how do we facilitate these?
- What are the alternative pathways?
- How do different governance levels capture or repress progressive innovation?
- How can we embed longer term conceptual thinking and analysis of complex situations?

Conclusions

- Further work needed to elaborate transition theory and its orientation to specific policy domains...
- but it is starting to deliver useful insights into the forces and drivers of future change, at different scales
- Planning suffers from inadequate tools and poor concepts for its future orientation.
- There is therefore potential to develop:
 - Theory of *planning for transition* (planning as a transition tool)
 - Theory of *transition for planning* (evolving better forms of planning)